

NSC BRIEFING

26 February 1958

NORTH AFRICA

I. Tunisian situation continues to deteriorate:

A. Bourguiba has suffered serious loss in popular support^{fel} by ~~not~~ not pressing for immediate Security Council action.

1. In attempt to recoup political fortunes, wide publicity being given by Bourguiba to new "hard line"--good relations can never be reestablished with France.

B. Fear widespread that France plans to reoccupy Tunisia--that proposed French military regroupment only move to that end.

1. Pineau denied 23 Feb that France contemplates reconquest; French Chief of Staff declares project not militarily feasible.

2. Nevertheless, Tunisians are organizing "resistance units," etc.

C. Right-wingers in Gaillard's cabinet--firmly opposing concessions, particularly on Bizerte--may abandon him during budget debate.

1. Socialists and Popular Republicans also restive, but probably unwilling to risk crisis now.

II. In Algeria situation also gloomy:

A. Implementation of basic statute--declared in effect 31 January--faces growing difficulties.

1. Moslem determination not to commit themselves to French strengthened by renewed rebel action; assassination 21 Feb of prominent pro French Moslem also bound to discourage cooperation.

2. Even Europeans declining reappointment--Mayor of Orleansville has publicly declined to serve; Mayor of Algiers (bitter opponent of Lacoste) indicated privately he would refuse.

B. Arms for rebels presumably still arriving--no recent reports, however.

1. French officials estimate famous Morice line (110-miles of electrified barbed wire) only 20% effective.

III. In Morocco, the government is deeply concerned over popular agitation resulting from Spanish-French military operations--underway since 10 February.

A. Initial phase, now concluded, concentrated Saguia el Hamra. French ground and air forces definitely involved. Results apparently meager.

B. Attack in Rio de Oro--reported to have begun 20 February.

C. Spanish making major effort to clear Ifai enclave.

D. Appears likely some French planes may have come from French bases in Morocco, but probably not US bases.

1. Possible that US-made aircraft being employed. Moroccan Government claims proof of this.

E. Populace around Agadir highly aroused. Rabat spokesman stated 22 February civil disturbances possible any time despite government efforts.

1. Government may be planning early demand for withdrawal all French (about 55,000) and Spanish (15-20,000) forces from Morocco.

2. Resentment over Saharan operation may be directed in part against US bases and forces in Morocco.

BACKGROUND

Spain has estimated 7,000 troops Ifni, 8,000 in Spanish Sahara; France about 5,000 in Mauritania and 2,000 extreme western Algeria. Armed rebel personnel (led by professional guerrillas from Morocco) probably total about 8,000.